BEFORE THE SHOWDOWN

If the government had been away, now it returned. On October 12, the Tsar invested General Trepov, the Military Governor of St. Petersburg, with dictatorial powers and ordered him to crush the strike. Trepov began to draw in the reliable military units stationed around the city—battalions, companies, even selected platoons. He did not try to use the railroads; all troops were ordered to proceed under their own power. On October 14, he issued an order to the troops: "Spare no cartridges and fire to kill!" At the same time he announced that no further political gatherings were to be held in educational institutions. Academic authorities were made responsible for enforcing this order and were instructed to close the institutions if they could not do so.

The president of the University called the students together. His voice trembling with emotion, he implored them to agree to a temporary closing of the University. The Students' Council designated me to speak in its name. I began by saying that I fully appreciated the concern of the president for the safety of the University. I agreed with him that we were facing danger but added that all revolutions demand sacrifices. The struggle for freedom had cost the Russian people countless victims. We did not demand further sacrifices. Each should answer for himself. Our only request to the president was not to interfere with those who were ready to face danger. And I moved the resolution: "The University, opened in the interest of the revolution, will stay open whatever may come."

The resolution was adopted almost unanimously. I tried to say something comforting to the president, who stood behind the speakers' pulpit looking like a tragic mask of despair, but he covered his eyes with a trembling hand and rushed away.

Later I was called to an industrial precinct. On the way I stopped at home and changed my clothes, putting on high boots, a Russian shirt, an overcoat, and a worker's cap—an outfit I had acquired soon after my first outdoor meeting. In this disguise, accompanied by local workers, I plodded from factory to factory, addressing crowds in courtyards and workshops. I told them again and again what I believed to be true: that all Russia was already on strike and that the Tsarist regime was bound to collapse.

It was past nine when I returned to the University. The main hall and classrooms were packed as never before. A mass meeting was being held in the courtyard. A student came to tell me that the members of the Academic Union, assembled in a classroom to decide its attitude to the general strike, asked the Students' Council